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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to identify how boys and girls differ in reported self-concept in lower class inner city schools. In addition, how teachers perceive the "typical" boys' and girls' self-concept was investigated. The Piers-Harris self-concept scale was administered in group sessions to students in grades three through six from various inner city and middle class schools. Elementary and secondary teachers enrolled in graduate education courses were asked to mark the Piers-Harris items as "typical" elementary school boys (or girls) would mark it. In both samples (lower class and middle class) boys tended to view themselves as being less anxious than girls and girls reported they were better behaved than boys. Teachers' stereotypic self-concept scores did not differentiate boys and girls. However, teachers did identify some items which differentiated in the middle class sample. Teachers appeared to greatly underestimate the differences between boys and girls in both samples. In addition, although the lower class girls had significantly lower self-concept scores than boys, middle class girls and boys did not differ in reported self-concept. (Author)

ED 064640

THE RELATION OF SEX ROLE STEREOTYPES TO THE SELF-CONCEPTS OF LOWER AND MIDDLE CLASS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN[1]

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Some findings suggest that self-concepts of men and women are very similar to their perspective sex role stereotypes and, since a greater number of masculine characteristics are associated with social desirability, women tend to hold negative views of their own personal worth relative to men (Clarkson, Vogel, Broverman, Broverman & Rosenkrantz, 1970; Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, & Broverman, 1968; Steinmann, Levi, & Fox, 1964). However self-concept scores for boys and girls have frequently been found to be equal (Coopersmith, 1967; Farls, 1966; Lekarczyk & Hill, 1969; Millen, 1966; Piers, 1965; Piers & Harris, 1964; Sears, 1970). These scores have often been differentially related to other measures such as anxiety and social worth even though the total scores were similar for the two groups (Connell & Johnson, 1970; Guardo, 1969; Kubeniec, 1970; Lekarczyk & Hill, 1969; Sears, 1970; Stanwyck & Felker, 1971). These findings may indicate that boys and girls report their self-concepts differently, perhaps in relation to sex appropriateness of the items as identified by peers or significant others.

Since several authors have suggested that sex role stereotypes differ in lower and middle class subcultures (Maccoby, 1966; Thomson & McCandless, 1970), the sex appropriateness of self-concept items may also change in different socioeconomic groups. Zirkel (1971) reviewed several studies which indicated that differences between reported self-concepts of black subjects and white subjects disappeared when socioeconomic class was taken

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into account. Thus, past research indicates differences in self-concept may exist between various socioeconomic groups, however these differences have not been related to differences in sex appropriateness of the items.

Coopersmith (1967) found that although boys and girls had the same self-concept scores, teachers rated girls significantly higher than boys on a self-concept scale. A study of nursery school children (Fagot and Patterson, 1969) indicated that teachers more often reinforced feminine type behaviors than masculine behaviors, although they did reinforce boys but not girls when children performed masculine behaviors. These differential expectations of teachers may also influence the student's conception of the sex appropriateness of various self-concept items. The present study investigated how lower and middle class boys and girls differ in self-concept and related these differences to stereotypic ideals set by teachers. The specific purposes were:

1. To identify how boys and girls differ in reported self-concept in lower class inner city schools;
2. To identify how boys and girls differ in reported self-concept in middle class rural and urban schools;
3. To compare the sex differences in reported self-concept found in differing socioeconomic classroom environments;
4. To identify how teachers believe elementary school boys and girls differ in self-concept; and
5. To compare the teachers' stereotypic beliefs of boys' and girls' self-concepts to differences in boys' and girls' reported self-concepts.

Method

The Piers-Harris self-concept scale was administered in group sessions to subjects in three samples. Sample I consisted of students grades three through six from eight inner-city, predominantly black elementary schools. Sample II consisted of students grades three through six from four middle class, predominantly white, elementary schools. These included thrr rural small town schools and one urban school. The self-concept scale was administered to both samples by a university tester reading each item to intact classroom groups. Sample III consisted of elementary and secondary teachers (66 females and 36 males) enrolled in graduate level education courses. These teachers were asked to mark each item as a "typical" or "average" elementary school boy (or girl) would mark it. These instructions were designed to elicit "stereotypic" responses from the teachers about boys' and girls' self-concepts. Sample sizes for each of the three samples are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Sample Sizes by Sex and Grade

Grade	Lower Class		Middle Class		Teachers	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Typical Boy	Typical Girl
3	152	112	193	170	58	44
4	132	125	192	159		
5	112	108	101	101		
6	87	102	108	110		

In order to identify how children differ in self-concept within samples I and II (purposes 1 and 2), a chi-square test was applied to individual item results. Boys' and girls' item answers within each grade and within each sample were compared in this manner. Differentiating items will be referred to as "male positive" (MP) or "female positive" (FP) depending on which group (boys or girls) more frequently marked the item in the manner indicative of positive self-concept. Differences in total self-concept scores were tested in each sample using a two way analysis of variance with sex and grade (four levels) as factors. Bartlett's test of homogeniety of varience was applied to the eight age and sex groups in each sample.

Identified sex differences were compared across groups using various methods of item classification. Items were classified by grade and sample according to which sex most frequently answered in the positive direction. Using the factor structure developed by Piers and Harris (1964), items were also classified within each sample as either MP or FP. The full titles of these factors are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Factor Structure of the Piers-Harris Scale

Factor Number	Factor Name	Number of Items
I:	Behavior	18
II:	Intellectual and School Status	18
III:	Physical Appearance and Attributes	12
IV:	Anxiety	13
V:	Popularity	12
VI:	Happiness and Satisfaction	9

Differences in teachers' total ratings of a "typical" boy's or girl's self-concept (purpose 4) were identified using a one-way analysis of variance. A chi-square analysis was used to identify sex discriminating items based on teacher ratings of "typical" boys and girls. Finally, teachers' stereotypic beliefs of "typical" students' self-concepts were compared to measured differences in self-concept in each sample (purpose 5). This was done by comparing the MP and FP items in samples I and II to the MP and FP items identified from teacher ratings.

Results

The results of the item analyses in each sample are presented in Table 3. Only items which differentiated boys and girls at the .05 level or beyond are presented. Using this significance level four significant differences resulting from chance alone might be expected on the 80 chi-square tests applied in each grade in each sample. The factors that the items appeared under in the original Piers and Harris (1964) study are also identified. The sex most frequently marking the item in the direction indicating a positive self-concept is identified in the table.

Table 4 indicates the number of MP or FP items at each grade level within each sample. Item 43 was omitted in the tabulations for sample I in Tables 4 and 5 since "inconsistencies" were found across grades in that sample. An "inconsistancy" is here defined to exist whenever items are marked more positively by one sex at one time, but more positively by the other sex at another time. Table 5 indicates the number of MP and FP items for each factor in sample I and II. Since some items appear in more than one factor, the total number of responses indicated does not necessarily equal the number of items exhibiting significant differences.

Table 4

Distribution of Item Differences by Grade and Sex within Samples

		GRADE				
		3	4	5	6	Items Overall
Sample I Lower Class	Boy Positive	12	9	12	22	28
	Girl Positive	1	4	4	2	9
Sample II Middle Class	Boy Positive	10	11	12	12	19
	Girl Positive	28	17	8	11	33

Table 5

Distribution of Item Differences by Factor and Sex within Samples

	Sample I Lower Class		Sample II Middle Class	
Factor	Boy Positive	Girl Positive	Boy Positive	Girl Positive
I: Behavior	1	3	1	16
II: School	7	0	4	6
III: Appearance	8	0	3	4
IV: Anxiety	7	0	8	0
V: Popularity	2	0	3	2
VI: Happiness	2	0	1	1
None of the Factors	5	2	3	6

Table 6 presents the means and standard deviations of the total self-concept scores for boys and girls in each grade within each sample. Results from the Bartletts test for homogeniety of variance indicated no significant differences among the grade and sex subgroups in either sample.

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations of Total Self-Concept Scores

Grade		Sample I Lower Class		Sample 2 Middle Class	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
3	Mean S.D.	55.60 (12.40)	53.91 (12.14)	53.91 (12.74)	56.58 (13.55)
4	Mean S.D.	53.15 (11.51)	51.58 (12.21)	55.37 (14.37)	56.42 (14.13)
5	Mean S.D.	55.28 (12.89)	51.46 (14.17)	57.24 (13.68)	55.75 (15.04)
6	Mean S.D.	54.61 (14.01)	50.11 (14.16)	56.04 (13.42)	55.06 (12.05)
Bartlett's X^2		= 10.37, df. = 7		Bartlett's X^2	= 8.40, df. = 7

Table 7

Analysis of Variance: Sample I

Source	df	MS	F
Sex	1	1714.60	10.39**
Grade	3	309.51	1.88
Sex x Grade	3	123.30	.75
Error	922	165.05	

** $p < .01$

Table 8

Analysis of Variance: Sample II

Source	df	MS	F
Sex	1	148.33	.80
Grade	3	83.35	.45
Sex x Grade	3	250.94	1.35
Error	1126	186.11	

Twenty-three items were identified as differentiating consistantly in both student samples. Six items (17, 41, 43, 51, 73 and 75) were found to give "inconsistant" results in the two samples. All six items were FP in the middle class sample and MP in the lower class sample.

No significant differences were found in teachers' total ratings of boys' and girls' "typical" self-concept. A summary of the teacher results is presented in Table 9. Five MP and 10 FP items were identified by the teachers ratings. All items identified by the teachers differentiated boys and girls in at least one grade in the middle class sample. However only six of these fifteen items differentiated boys and girls in the lower class sample. The factor structure of the items identified by teachers and students as differentiating between boys and girls in each of the two student samples is presented in Table X.

Table 9

Analysis of Variance Results, Means, and Standard Deviations of "Typical" Self-Concept Scores

	Mean	S.D.	$F_{df=1,99}$
Typical Boy	55.47	13.98	.4732
Typical Girl	57.43	14.45	

Table 10

Factor Structure of Teacher Identified Differentiating Items[1]

Factors	Lower Class		Middle Class	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
I: Behavior	0	2	0	3
II: School	1	0	2	4
III: Appearance	3	0	3	1
IV: Anxiety	1	0	1	0
V: Popularity	1	0	1	1
VI: Happiness	0	0	0	0
None of the factors	0	0	0	1

[1] Only items identified both teachers and students as differentiating are included.

Discussion

The first purpose of this study was to identify how boys and girls differ in reported self-concept in lower class inner city schools. In this sample girls had significantly lower total self-concepts scores than boys

in grades 3-6. Item results indicate more "male positive" items than "female positive" items. The existing "female positive" items were almost exclusively items belonging to the "Behavior" factor identified by Piers and Harris (1964). Each of the remaining five factors contained more "male positive" than "female positive" items. In general, lower class girls report a more negative view of themselves than do lower class boys, except in terms of behavior. The boys more than girls take a positive view of themselves in terms of "Physical Appearance and Attributes," "Intellectual and School Status," and "Anxiety," and to a lesser extent in terms of "Popularity" and "Happiness and Satisfaction."

The second purpose of this study was to identify how boys and girls differ in reported self-concept in middle class rural and urban schools. No significant differences were found in the total self-concept scores in this sample. However, many items were identified which were differentially answered by the two sexes. Girls more frequently answered the "Behavior" items in a positive direction while boys responded to "Anxiety" related items more positively.

The third purpose of this study was to compare the differences in reported self-concepts of lower and middle class students. A notable difference between the two samples was the lower self-concept reported by lower class girls. This is evidenced by lower total self-concept scores and fewer "female positive" items. Lower class boys tended to take an especially positive view of themselves (in relation to lower class girls) in terms of "Physical Appearance and Attributes" and "Intellectual and School Status." Middle class boys and girls appeared to have approximately the same number of positive views of themselves in these two areas. However, "male positive" and "female positive" items

were found in both factors and samples. The two samples were similar in that girls responded to those items relating to "Behavior" while boys responded to items relating to "Anxiety" in the manner suggesting a positive self-concept. In other words, girls reported themselves to be more anxious and better behaved than boys in both samples. Piers (1965) also reported finding similar sex differences. The studies reporting no differences between boys and girls in terms of total scores (Farls, 1966; Millen, 1966; Piers, 1965; and Piers and Harris, 1964) support the present findings of no total score differences between middle class boys and girls. In summary, consistant sex differences appear in reported self-concept in relation to behavior and anxiety type items. Lower class boys, middle class boys and middle class girls obtained similar total self-concept scores while lower class girls scored noticably below all other groups (no tests of significance were applied).

The fourth purpose of this study was to identify teachers' perceptions of differences in self-concept between elementary school boys and girls. In contrast to Coopersmith's finding that teachers identified girls as having higher self-concept scores than boys (1967), the present study found no sex differences in total teacher rated, "typical" self-concept scores. These differences may be a result of asking teachers to rate students in general rather than rating individual students. Still, fifteen items were found to differentiate "typical" boys and girls. Ten of these fifteen items identified were "female positive", i.e. indicating girls answer more frequently than boys in the direction of positive self-concept. Although more "female positive" items were identified by the teachers, more "female positive" items actually existed at least in the middle class sample.

The fifth purpose of this study was to compare teachers' stereotypic beliefs of sex differences in self-concept to the previously identified differences in boys' and girls' reported self-concepts (purpose 5). The items identified by teachers as differentiating were all identified as differentiating boys and girls in the lower class sample. This is partially due to the self-concept differences of lower and middle class girls. Teachers appear to greatly underestimate the number differences between boys and girls in both samples. Teachers were best at identifying "male positive" and "female positive" items related to the "Achievement and School Status" factor (60% success on the items differentiating middle class boys and girls). They also identified all the (middle class) "male positive" items on the "Physical Appearance and Attributes" factor.

Conclusions and Summary

Sex appropriate behavior is an aspect of socially desirable behavior which will differentiate the appropriateness of specific acts for boys and girls. Since self-concept and social desirability measures are correlated (Millen, 1966) one might expect reported self-concept scores to have a different meaning for boys and girls to the extent that differentially sex appropriate items exist on the scale. The results of this study indicate that many items on the self-concept measure are marked differentially by boys and girls in both lower and middle classes. However, it is impossible to conclude from this study whether the differences result from "differential sex appropriate items" or "differential self perceptions", that are sex-related. In either case differential sex-related scoring seems necessary. The differences between social classes and the fact that the teacher designations were more similar to the middle class sample

than they were to the lower class sample also indicates that the standard scoring keys might be weighted in favor of the middle class subject, particularly with female subjects. If sex-related scorings were developed the next step would be to determine their cross-social class appropriateness.

Further research needs to be done to identify whether boys and girls interpret the items as being sex appropriate or inappropriate. Also the variables that are differentially related to self-concept need to be investigated as to whether they are influenced by sex appropriateness of the tasks. Finally, behavioral measures need to be compared to the self-report measures to identify the extent sex-appropriateness influences specific item responses.

The present study investigated how boys and girls differ in reported self-concept in lower and middle class cultures and how teachers perceive the "typical" boys' and girls' self-concept. The Piers-Harris self concept scale was administered in group sessions to students in grades three through six from various inner city and middle class school. Elementary and secondary teachers enrolled in graduate level education courses were asked to mark the Piers-Harris items as "typical" elementary school boys (or girls) would mark it. In the lower class sample girls had significantly lower total self-concept scores than boys. Middle class boys and girls did not differ in total reported self-concept. In both samples boys tended to view themselves as being less anxious than girls and girls reported they were better behaved than boys. Teachers' stereotypic self-concept scores did not differentiate boys and girls. However, teachers did identify some items which differentiated in the middle class sample. Teachers appear to greatly underestimate the differences between boys and girls in both samples.

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Table III

Piers-Harris Self-Concept Items Differentiating Boys and Girls

Item[1]	Factor[2]	Lower-Class Sample I				Middle-Class Sample II				Teachers Sample III
		Grade				Grade				
		3	4	5	6	3	4	5	6	
1. My classmates make fun of me.	V								mp	
5. I am smart.	II				mp					
6. I am shy.	IV	mp			mp	mp		mp	mp	
7. I get nervous when the teacher calls on me.	II & IV	mp		mp	mp		mp	mp		
8. My looks bother me.	III, IV, & VI								mp	
9. When I grow up I will be an important person.	II						mp	mp	mp	mp
10. I get worried when we have tests in school.	IV						mp	mp		
11. I am unpopular.	II&V								mp	
12. I am well behaved in school.	I			fp		fp	fp	fp	fp	fp
13. It is usually my fault when something goes wrong.	I					fp		fp		
14. I cause trouble to my family.	I					fp				fp
15. I am strong.	III	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp
17. I am an important member of my family.	II		mp		mp		fp			
20. I give up easily.	IV	mp	mp		mp	mp				
21. I am good in my schoolwork.	II								fp	fp
22. I do many bad things.	I					fp	fp		fp	
23. I can draw well.			mp	mp		mp		mp		
24. I am good in music.						fp			fp.	fp
25. I behave badly at home.	I				fp	fp	fp			
26. I am slow in finishing my schoolwork.	II					fp	fp		fp	fp
27. I am an important member of my class.	II & III			mp	mp					
28. I am nervous.	IV				mp					
29. I have pretty eyes.	III					fp	fp	fp	fp	fp
30. I can give a good report in front of the class.	II	mp			mp					
31. In school I am a dreamer.	I						fp			
32. I pick on my brothers and sisters.	I					fp				

Table III (continued)
Piers-Harris Self-Concept Items Differentiating Boys and Girls

Item[1]		Factor[2]	Lower-Class Sample I				Middle-Class Sample II				Teachers Sample III
			Grade				Grade				
			3	4	5	6	3	4	5	6	
33.	My friends like my ideas.	II				mp					
34.	I often get into trouble.	I			fp		fp	fp	fp		
36.	I am unlucky.	VI			mp						
37.	I worry a lot.	IV	mp					mp	mp	mp	
39.	I usually want my own way.						fp				
41.	I have nice hair.	III				mp	fp	fp			
42.	I often volunteer in school.	II						fp			
43.	I have a pleasant face.	III	fp			mp	fp	fp			
45.	I hate school.			fp		fp	fp	fp	fp	fp	
47.	I am sick a lot.			mp		mp					
48.	I am often mean to other people.	I			fp		fp			fp	
50.	I am unhappy.	VI			mp	mp					
51.	I have many friends	V				mp	fp				
54.	I am goodlooking.	III			mp	mp					
55.	I have lots of pep.	III	mp				mp		mp		
56.	I get into a lot of fights.	I	fp	fp			fp	fp	fp		fp
57.	I am popular with boys.	II, III, & V	mp	mp		mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp
59.	My family is disappointed in me.	I, VI					fp				
62.	I am picked on at home.					mp		mp	mp	mp	
63.	I am a leader in games and sports.	III	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp
64.	I am clumsy.	I			mp	mp				mp	
65.	In games and sports I watch instead of play.				mp		mp	mp			
66.	I forget what I learn.	II					fp				fp
67.	I am easy to get along with.	I					fp	fp			
68.	I lose my temper easily.				fp		fp				
69.	I am popular with girls.	V					fp	fp	fp	fp	fp
70.	I am a good reader.	II					fp	fp		fp	fp
72.	I dislike my brother (sister).						fp				
73.	I have a good figure.					mp	fp				
74.	I am often afraid.	IV	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp			

Table III (continued)
Piers-Harris Self-Concept Items Differentiating Boys and Girls

Item[1]	Factor[2]	Lower-Class Sample I Grade 3	4	5	6	Middle-Class Sample II Grade 3	4	5	6	Teachers Sample III
75. I am always dropping or breaking things.		mp				fp				
76. I cry easily.	IV	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp	mp
78. I think bad thoughts.	I		fp			fp				
79. I can be trusted.	I		fp				fp	fp		
80. I am a good person.	I					fp			fp	

[1]Only items showing sex differences at the .05 level or beyond were included here.

[2]The factor numbers refer to Table III.

[3]Identifies group showing largest percent of positive responses where significant differences were found.